

292 The head-dresses (*di*) and ornaments (*hambo*) are themselves artistic  
 531 creations. A full feather head-dress is composed of some two dozen strands of  
 feathers, each strand consisting of a dozen or more feathers. The strands are  
 carefully made, sometimes from artistically shaped and trimmed feathers, while  
 short down of striking colours may be tied to the tips of feathers. The order and  
 arrangement of the strands making up the headdress is to some extent  
 determined by custom but mainly by the artistic sense of the decorator, who  
 301 may spend days working out the precise effect he wants. Similarly the *hambo*  
 531 are often composed of a variety of objects – dog's teeth, shells, pieces of  
 crocodile skin, a special kind of banana seed, for instance. The decorator aims at  
 a pleasing design but is always aware of the effect of the total object as body  
 777 decoration in relation to the skin, face and body of the wearer. While the objects  
 themselves undoubtedly have magical significance, and much might be dis-  
 covered about the symbolism of *di* and *hambo*, my informants were far more  
 interested in talking to me about the aesthetics rather than the occult  
 significance of these decorations. I surmise that the magical efficacy is actually  
 thought to inhere in the beauty of these objects rather than in the specific  
 qualities of component parts. Women are as lavishly decorated as men. Though  
 some *hambo* are reserved for males only and others are characteristically female,  
 decorations are usually interchangeable between the sexes.

796 *Music, Dance and Song.* Today the great occasions when body decoration is  
 533 performed mainly coincide with Christian festivals – Christmas, Easter, and  
 535 name days of saints. But these dates tend to be close to the festive periods in the  
 traditional Orokaiva calendar. For instance, Easter occurs around the beginning  
 of the traditional feasting season, while Christmas is close to the rituals  
 performed to stimulate the filling out of the taro tubers planted in the period  
 before the rains. It is on these great occasions that the major dance cycles are  
 performed, accompanied by entirely traditional songs and drum music. But  
 'practising' for these performances proceeds for months before and after  
 Christmas, and again between Easter and the end of June. In Lent, all this is  
 strictly prohibited, for reasons that again go back to taro magic. At any time of  
 the year but this, one hears almost every able-bodied male in the village, from the  
 age of two upwards, practising the dance, with or without the accompaniment of  
 songs, while every village has its original poets who compose new songs every  
 year. Dance 'practices' occur rather frequently, about four times a week in the  
 two months or so before a performance. They tend to start in the early evening  
 and continue until after midnight. Some of the dancers wear a few decorations  
 when practising. But these 'practices' occur only if a large group can be  
 mustered.

535 The Orokaiva mostly dance in pairs one behind the other, forming double  
 file. The pairs always consist of persons of the same sex, men or women, who  
 form more or less permanent partnerships. The dances themselves are described  
 in some detail by Williams (1930: Ch. XIV), whose useful account would be  
 even more valuable if he had not attempted to make up some kind of synthesis  
 of the dance and drama of three somewhat different tribes (Orokaiva, Aiga,  
 Binandere).

In Sivepe there were two dance leaders, one from each of the major clans,  
 who danced as partners. They had the final say about the programme; their body

18: Dakeyne K-5 (1962-1964) 1969  
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23  
Yega

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● 531



Fig. 8. Bark-cloth (tapa). Each manufacturer has her own special designs traced in red and black dyes on the white material

[P-11-B]